

Bold Athenians make it tough for Champions

Wycombe Wanderers 2, Marlow 1

PREMIER Mid-week League champions, Wycombe Wanderers, kicked off their flood-light programme with a tight, 'derby' victory over tenacious Athenians, Marlow, at Loakes Park on Monday evening. The score reversed the result of an end-of-term friendly at Marlow last season, writes **Mike Whitesman**.

Leading 2-0 at half-time, both goals brilliantly headed in via the lively Tony Horseman, Wycombe were run close by their visitors, who as newcomers to floodlight competition had previously claimed a home draw off Slough before losing the return by a narrow 2-1 margin last week.

Living constantly under the shadow of their more illustrious Isthmian neighbours, Marlow included three former Wanderers in what formed more or less their strongest possible line-up. Pete Sewell, and more recently, Stuart Thompson and Steve Freeman, have all worn Wycombe blue.

But there two stars were goal-keeper Ron Seary and right-winger Dave Woolley. The latter, an ex - Maidenhead striker, showed ample speed and wit to offset the challenge of Charlie Gale, much the same as Banbury winger Alan Hellyer had done in Wanderers' recent F.A. Cup-tie.

So while the ever reliable Charlie struggles to rekindle his old flame, it is an ominous sign for him that Scottish international defender, Iain MacLean should be gaining in pace and know-how with every outing.

Enigmatic Tony Horseman however, remains a dilemma; and his struggle for automatic selection one of the most heated talking points at Loakes Park. Last night saw the well-known menacing side of "Bodger" in the role to which his harassing style is most suited.

Marlow, although clearly the weaker side, shown no fear at any stage of the match, throwing down the gauntlet at once by stationing their defence just short of the half-way line

while their forwards gave an early testing to Wycombe's shadow back row.

The policy was bold and in many ways a sizeable relief after the block-at-all-costs wall mounted by Dulwich on Saturday. But the Isthmians' attack was all the trickier for the repairing of Horseman and Johnny Hutchinson.

After 15 minutes Keith Searle lobbed across a pinpoint pass for Horseman to meet and head in at the far post. The move typified Searle's luck which ran out only when he tried for goal himself.

Sewell dashed his hopes with a 12th hour clearance following some razor-sharp inter-passing between Tony and Hutch in the 23rd minute. Yet, a Hutchinson corner nine minutes later, found Horseman, this time by the near post, to repeat his earlier success.

Searle rocked a Marlow post in injury time, but Seary did much to keep it 2-0 at the interval, and again throughout the latter period.

While Searle missed an early sitter, the Wycombe spearhead could nonetheless have recorded a second-half hat-trick but for the 'keeper.

Yet John Maskell was also worked hard and a 71st-minute goal, lashed home by young Leo Markham, Marlow's prolific scorer, recently promoted from the Reserves, injected an extra thrill into the last quarter of play.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell; P. Fusillo (sub.: B. Baker, 59th min.), C. Gale; V. Faulkner, I. MacLean, L. Hartridge; B. Bremer, K. Blunt, K. Searle, A. Horseman, J. Hutchinson.

MARLOW: R. Seary; P. Sewell, P. Eyres; G. Reid, P. Stone, S. Thompson; D. Woolley, D. Richardson, L. Markham, M. McKeown, S. Freeman (sub.: P. Stonell, 68th min.).

GOALSCORERS: Wycombe—Horseman 2 (15, 32); Marlow—Markham (71). Attendance: 1,112.